

MA THE CLEVELAND MUSEUM OF ART

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PRESS RELEASE

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MATERIAL MATTERS: FIFTY YEARS OF GIFTS FROM THE TEXTILE ARTS CLUB
November 21 - December 30, 1984

A special exhibition marks the fiftieth anniversary of the Textile Arts Club of The Cleveland Museum of Art. Distinctive among organizations devoted to fostering an appreciation of textiles, by virtue of the range and continuity of its services to the Museum, the club helps the Museum acquire textiles, sponsors lectures and workshops on materials, designs, and techniques, and holds exhibitions of work by fiber artists. The 180 members include textile artists and collectors.

During its 50 years as an affiliate of the Museum, the Textile Arts Club has contributed gifts earning it the status of Benefactor of The Cleveland Museum of Art. Thirty-nine of the Club's textile gifts will be in this exhibition, displayed together for the first time.

The earliest pieces are sixth-century silk fragments--one a tunic ornament, the other a tapestry border--found in Egyptian graves; the most recent is a figurative, lace-like panel, entitled Gemini, which was knotted by Czechoslovakian artist Luba Krejčí in 1977. Brightly colored fragments offer glimpses of some important textile industries whose products have survived only rarely: a piece of Turkish Ottoman cut velvet, part of a sixth- or seventh-century Sasanian silk, and a unique example of tenth-century Byzantine tapestry weaving. Complete costumes and accessories include two seventeenth-century English embroidered bags, an Indian chintz morning gown made in the eighteenth century, and an Indian sari of purple silk and brocaded gold filé. Also from nineteenth-century India comes a kantha

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or ceremonial quilt, its surface overflowing with embroidered motifs of Bengal folk art. Among the contemporary fiber artists represented are Mariska Karasz, Lenore Tawney, Jean Stamsta, and Olga de Amaral.

The textile collections of The Cleveland Museum of Art, of which these objects are so valuable a part, are little known treasures because their fragility requires that they be shown only briefly and infrequently. About 3,700 pieces from all parts of the world, dating from the second millennium B.C. to the 1970s, constitute the collections. A particular strength is the Coptic and Egypto-Arabic collection, covering the major styles woven in Egypt between the fourth and twelfth centuries. The medieval Iranian and Iraqi embroideries and silks of the ninth through twelfth century--the Abbasid, Buyid, and Seljuk periods--constitute the finest and most extensive collection in the world and include many silks with inscriptions giving the date and sometimes the place of manufacture. Other choice holdings include: Peruvian textiles, especially from the Paracas, Nazca, and Huari-Tiahuanaco cultures; medieval Spanish textiles, with a fifteenth-century silk curtain which is the largest and most complete known to have survived; tapestries of about 1500 from the French chateau of Chaumont, among other notable medieval and Renaissance European textiles; and some of the few surviving textiles of the T'ang Dynasty (618-907) in China.

The exhibition, Material Matters, has been organized by Anne Wardwell, the Museum's curator of textiles. Throughout its run--from November 21 through December 30--there will be art films, slide-tapes, lectures, and gallery talks devoted to textiles, including talks in the exhibition during the first week it is open. All events are free and open to the public. A catalogue written by Mrs. Wardwell is available free in the exhibition.

For additional information, photographs, or color slides, please contact the Public Information Office, The Cleveland Museum of Art, 11150 East Boulevard, Cleveland, Ohio 44106; 216/421-7340.